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Supporting Communication and Language

Humans are social beings and communication is at the heart of all that we do. Humans are pre-programmed to communicate and language is key to us being active members of society.

Babies' communication starts at birth when they share their first cry. Babies' ability to cry enables them to communicate when something is wrong or when they have a need. Babies continue to develop their methods of communication through smiling, facial expressions, movement – kicking or shaking their arms and legs, cooing, gurgling and babbling, making speech sounds, pointing at things they want and making attempts to copy familiar words.

The first three years of life is recognised as the most intensive period for acquiring speech and language skills. Within this period there appears to be times where exposure to language and sound is received more readily by the brain in babies and young children. If these episodes are not filled with experiences of sounds and language then delays in their language development may occur.

NDNA (2013) *EQUUS Developing Child Publication*

Stages of communication and language development

The following stages of communication and language development are from The Communication Trust '*Universally Speaking, The ages and stages of children's communication development from birth to 5 years*' (2015).

www.thecommunicationtrust.org.uk/media/363847/tct_univspeak_0-5.pdf

By six months, babies will usually:

- Make sounds, like cooing, gurgling and babbling, to themselves and with other people
- Make noises to get your attention
- Watch your face when you talk to them
- Get excited when they hear voices coming, showing their excitement by kicking or waving their arms or making noises
- Smile and laugh when other people smile and laugh
- Make sounds back when talked to.



Photo courtesy of NDNA training

You can support babies of this age by:

- Getting close, let them see your face, get right down to their level, even lying down to make eye contact, talk in a sing song voice – babies respond really well to this